

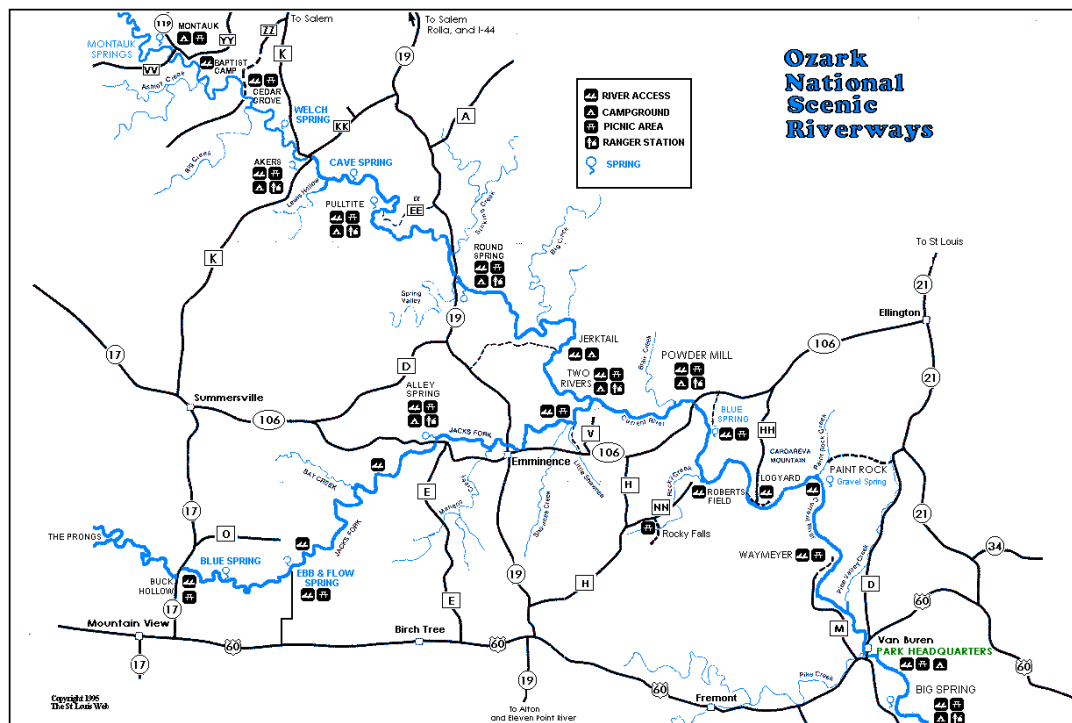
Report

Ozark National Scenic Riverways

1.0 Site Description

Ozark National Scenic Riverways, the nation's first "scenic riverways," has a low need for Alternative Transportation Systems (ATS) services. Although over 1.5 million visitors are attracted to the canoeing, tubing, fishing, hunting and hiking opportunities within Ozark Riverways each year, bus transit would not be responsive to the needs of the typical visitor and would be difficult to implement because of the dispersed character of activities within the park, the dispersed and disconnected character of the road system, and the numerous access points to the park. A map of the park is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Map of Ozark National Scenic Riverways



■ 2.0 Existing ATS

Ozark National Scenic Riverways was created by an Act of Congress on August 24, 1964, to protect 134 miles of the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers in the Ozark Highlands of south-eastern Missouri. The area became the nation's first "scenic riverway" – a forerunner to the Wild and Scenic River Act by four years. The park is managed by the NPS. The Park Superintendent is Benton Clary.

Ozark Riverways is located approximately 20 miles north of the Missouri-Arkansas border, and within a day's drive of several large metropolitan areas, including St. Louis, Memphis, Kansas City, and Springfield (Missouri). U.S. Highway 60 and State Highway 19 provide the primary road access into the area. There are approximately 380 miles of roads within the park, most of which are secondary public roads or traces. There are also numerous road access points along both the Current and Jacks Fork Rivers.

There are over 80,000 acres within the park's boundaries and 134 miles of managed rivers. The landscape is predominately rural, with broadleaf forests and occasional open fields. Ozark Riverways contains 19 sites currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places as well as over 300 recorded caves. There is no formal visitor center for the park and no entrance fee.

About 1.5 million people visit Ozark Riverways each year. At its peak in the early 1970s, annual visitation reached 2.0 million. Visitation is expected to increase in the future as portions of U.S. 60 are widened to four lanes. Although Ozark Riverways is open year around, visitation is heaviest during the summer months, especially during weekends and holidays.

Most visitors drive their own vehicles to the park. A few privately-owned charter buses bring visitors to the area. A typical visitor spends a few hours in the park, driving the park roads and visiting attractions such as the Alley Roller Mill or some of the caves. A large number of visitors spend a full day or weekend in the park. These visitors typically take advantage of the canoeing, tubing, fishing, hunting and hiking opportunities in the park. Canoe and tube concessioners provide drop-off and pick-up services for their customers.

The overall General Management Plan (GMP) for Ozark National Scenic Riverways was completed in 1982. There are no formal plans to update the GMP, although the NPS staff believe that an update is needed. No formal transportation studies have been completed in the recent past. However, the NPS staff have provided input to transportation planning activities conducted by the Missouri Department of Transportation. These studies have generally focused on improvements to state highways in the area.

■ 3.0 ATS Needs

No significant transportation problems were identified by park staff during the telephone interview. On Saturdays and Sundays during peak summer months, some congestion is

experienced at the “put-in” points along the rivers where most tubing and canoeing excursions begin. Traffic at these locations consists of both private vehicles and shuttles operated by canoe and tube concessioners. For visitors who use the services of a concessioner, parking is generally provided on the concessioner’s property.

Bicycle traffic in the park is minimal during peak season. Most of the park roads are very narrow (no shoulders) with severe horizontal and vertical geometry. The hot and humid weather conditions also tend to constrain bicycling and hiking activities during the summer months.

The shuttles operated by canoe and tube concessioners represent the only form of alternative transportation currently in operation in the park. Improvements to this shuttle system could potentially help reduce the congestion being experienced at the “put-in” points on Saturday and Sunday mornings during the peak season. These improvements could range from scheduled arrival times for shuttle buses to geometric improvements in the vicinity of the put-in points (e.g., additional boat ramps, staging areas, etc.). The use of other privately-owned shuttles for transportation to or within the park is limited.

■ 4.0 Basis of ATS Needs

The need for new alternative transportation to or within Ozark National Scenic Riverways is low. In general, bus transit would not be responsive to the needs of the typical visitor and would be difficult to implement because of the dispersed character of activities within the park, the dispersed and disconnected character of the road system, and the numerous access points to the park.

■ 5.0 Bibliography

Information from various Internet Web sites.

November 22, 1999 telephone conversation with Tim Blank, Chief Ranger and South Unit Manager.